Design Sense
A MARKETING PUBLICATION 51 OF LIPPINCOTT & MARGULIES

OVERKILL:

Marketing's Most Expensive Mistake—Page 1

Decca Radar: Design Breakthrough—Page 14

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In the grand strategy of nuclear warfare, the ultimate awesome move is called *overkill*—the power to smash an enemy's total warmaking machine, *and more*. It is regarded as a "safety factor." Some military experts argue that—with nuclear bombers airborne around the clock and with other missile-launching sites in constant readiness on land and sea—overkill could be termed a mutual annihilation factor.

Put bombs aside: define overkill as an excessive force, far greater than needed to attain an objective. Now consider its startling parallel in U.S. business, long engaged in a bitter marketing war with no truce in sight.

Hope lies, first of all, in understanding the conflict. The beginning of a solution lies, thereafter, in recognizing that marketers squander great energy today in communications overkill which presumes to overcome consumer resistance and wither competition. But proof steadily mounts that it tends to destroy itself. As a marketing practice it is certainly inefficient—and all too often, ineffective.

Communications used to be relatively simple; today, thousands of messages compete for the consumer's attention

Down Memory Lane

You doubtless remember when communication techniques were very simple and conducted like a gentleman's game among U.S. businessmen. Thirty years ago, advertising, by comparison with today's pressures, must have seemed like child's play. No six-color presses extruded paper faster than a man could run. No computers babbled a megamessage output. Television was a crude scanning disc in a laboratory. Some people still fiddled with cat's whiskers on their crystal sets in order to tune in Jack Benny or the Fibber McGee & Molly Show.

If you can remember these programs then you may even remember their sponsors. Most people over forty can still dimly hear Jack Benny selling Jell-O and Fibber McGee praising Johnson's Wax. After thirty years, the sponsors have still not faded from memory. These two shows dominated the single most important advertising medium of that time—radio.

Moreover, beyond knowing they would make an impression, the sponsors could roughly predict the gains from their radio advertising expenditures. But that one-time paradise of predictability has become a wilderness in which an insistent cacophony is relieved only by claims and counterclaims, boasts and rebuttals, weeping, wailing and gnashing of sponsor's teeth.

Some advertising experts will state with assurance that inability to associate a sponsor or product with a TV program is no measure of the program's effectiveness. Such results do not spell failure of the program, they say. They mumble a new and mystical jargon about the public's "subliminal perception of the sponsor and his product," the mental phenomena of "subconscious gratitude and appreciation," the elusive boon of "a latent induction of buying motivation." Marketing men, not surprisingly, show some skepticism about whether their large advertising outlays have bought anything of real value. How, they wonder, can they measure such intangibles as these? The public's "subliminal, subconscious, latent" mental processes are surely, for psychometric purposes, a mystery wrapped in a riddle within an enigma.

Product Proliferation

Think of the radical changes we've seen in the marketing landscape in only three decades. A quarter century ago there were far fewer companies and products, even though recent years have brought more mergers and acquisitions. The birth rate of new companies has not slackened; it more than compensates for the disappearance rate of old companies through absorption or bankruptcy.

The important factor is not so much the growing corporate population as the proliferation of what they produce. Improvements in technology have spawned a staggering expansion of lines, marked by an array of new products, old products, regional products, new and old brand names, mountains of private labels. All participate in a massive promotional assault on the poor consumer.

The plight of the consumer who wants to investigate the entire new car market before buying typifies marketing's new look. Chrysler, Ford and General Motors once made only a few models of each brand; the problem of choice was minimal. Today, the car makers of England, France, Germany, Sweden, Italy, Japan and others clamor for the U.S. buyer's attention. And today, the buyer, after long analysis, may narrow the field down to Chevrolet but he's still a long, agonized way from his final selection. He must still weigh the virtues of the Caprice, the Impala Super Sport, the regular Impala, the Bel Air, the Biscayne, the Super Sport 396, the Malibu, the 300 Deluxe, the 300 Regular, the Chevy 2 Super Sport, the Nova, the Chevy 2 One Hundred, the Corvair Monza, the Corvair 500, the Camaro, and the Corvette. Then he must compare two door models against four door, 8 cylinders against 6, 118-inch wheelbase against 108-inch . . . colors . . . extras . . . and optional equipment.

A computer is needed to sort out the thousands of significant new car factors. But our buyer is not a computer—nor is he likely to use a computer in making his decision.

In actual practice, he might abandon his investigation almost at the outset. He'll buy a car—but he may choose it on whim, uncritical preference, or perfunctory evaluation, shutting his eyes and plugging his

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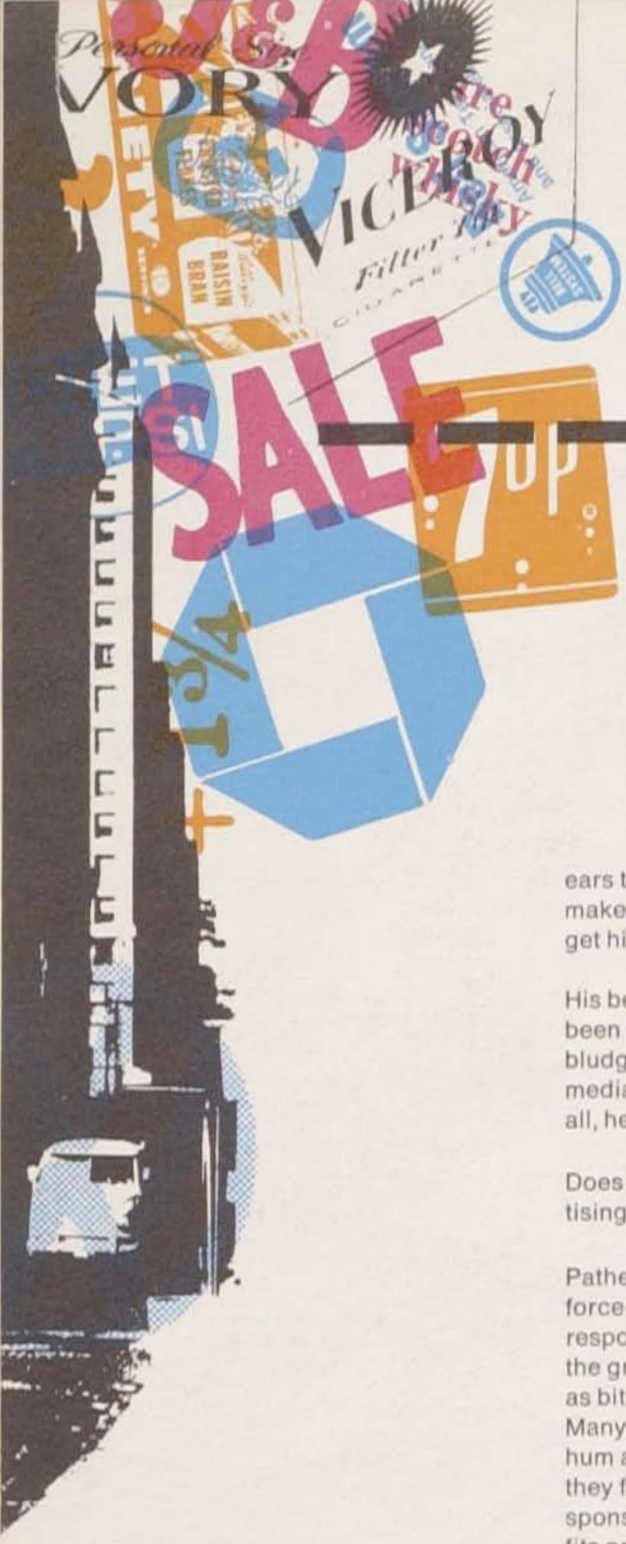

Selective Perception: The human mind can choose only a few stimuli from the many presented to it

ears to most blandishments of rival car makers who all but stand on their heads to get his attention.

His behavior is understandable. He has been the target for hundreds of messages bludgeoning his senses through all kinds of media. If he tried to react positively to them all, he might understandably go mad!

Does this mean that no messages—advertising or otherwise—get through?

Pathetically few get through with desired force—and even these may bring no positive response. More messages, of course, make the grade as fragments, winding up often as bits of confusion in consumers' minds. Many can recall a slogan, a catchline, or hum a few notes from a jingle. But too often they fail to connect them with or recall a sponsor's name, brand name, or the benefits promised from the use of the product.

Hardest to swallow is the fact that many advertising messages are completely screened out.

Why?

The human mind, with its average working vocabulary of less than 5,000 words, can absorb only so much. The most brilliant people have limits of perception and all of us have a built-in mental security system, a protective mechanism that helps us function. Consciously and unconsciously, people react to stimuli that they *want* to perceive.

Traffic noise is a case in point. When you're busy doing something important, you probably don't hear it. But when it's your business to hear traffic noise, your mind makes certain that you do.

This is the essence of selective perception Through this psychological phenomenon, distractions—chiefly visual or auditory—are prevented from registering on your consciousness. To a lesser extent, the senses of taste, touch and smell may also be blocked. Aside from the individual's own characteristics, his selective perception is also affected by what is being transmitted, how it is transmitted and the environment in which it is transmitted.

In the environment of today's intense and overabundant communications one must be ingenious to get a message through to the already message-surfeited consumer.

What is the ingenious solution being offered companies year after year?

If your competitor blasts them with 76 trombones, superblast them with 176! Why buy a one-page ad? Smack 'em between the eyes with a 24 page insert. How about a ten-story neon spectacular on Times Square! How else can you make them see? How else hear?

And so it goes: Advertise more and twice as loudly! Overstate! Let's throw in everything we've got! Let's clobber those balky consumers! Smack between the eyes! Bang

SALE

What is the "ingenious" solution offered to companies year after year?

on both ears! Pow, right in the kisser! Let's make sure we're seen and we're heard!

The frenetic signals are being called, the hot lines are burning up, the panic buttons are being jabbed, in reality, every day in this country. The trilogue among advertising people, manufacturers, and consumers rises day by day to new crescendos of almost unintelligible audio-visual noise.

The Death Of Believability

This is Operation Overkill—marketing style.

The strange psychology of advertising overkill is little different from the dubious strategy of military overkill. Nobody must accuse us of not giving it all we've got. Surely, through overkill, we will obtain our objectives. We can overkill our adversary more than he can overkill us!

But overkill is fantastically expensive and self-defeating. The price paid for persuasion per capita today is far more than ever paid before. Today's over-all communications problem is characterized by vast amounts of money being spent—with no relief in sight. According to the Statistical Abstract of the United States, the gross national product showed a rise of 70 percent during the period, 1955-1965. Corporate profits did not advance apace; they lagged behind the gain in GNP by almost 30 percent.

At the same time, the costs of advertising in measured media advanced inexorably. The cumulative rise over the decade was substantial to say the least. And while it is unquestionably true that advertisers are getting more for their money today, it is equally true that the addition is not in proportion to the costs. No skilled economic internist is needed to diagnose part of the trouble as overkill in advertising practices.

Cost alone does not make overkill an unhealthy marketing practice. Ironically, overkill kills itself in the end. Not only does it spawn many more messages to compete for consumer attention, but it also tends to destroy a vital attribute that advertising needs to be effective. *Believability* is overkill's prime casualty. There are none so blind as those who won't see, and none so skeptical as those who won't believe any advertising claims of good, better, best.

Though repetition is one component of overkill strategy, it is not under attack here. Repetition is a sound, time-tested advertising strategem. The deplorable components of overkill are 1) the overstated claim, 2) the urge to shout louder and louder, 3) the pursuit of the impossible goal of "total" consumer saturation, 4) the compulsion to overwhelm all competition, no matter how formidable. The last-mentioned is the most likely to lead to mutual annihilation.

Why do companies persist in advertising more and enjoying it less? For many executives this is a bitter question. Advertising has a great tradition behind it. Nobody would argue that it has not been a major force in the dynamic growth of the U.S. economy. But corporate officers have sometimes voted huge advertising expenditures solely because their competitors are spending more. Admittedly, it is difficult for an advertiser to resist increased spending after hearing a report that a competitor will spend extra millions next year.

Within your own corporate family, how do you handle the various product groups that jockey for brighter budgetary positions? Do the hands that control the pursestrings easily loosen their grip? Does it not often seem simpler to give each group a bigger advertising appropriation than seek other marketing solutions to problems?

This is escalation, whether it's keeping up with the Jones Company or permitting an upward spiral of advertising costs within your own company. And such escalation is coming more and more under the hard gaze of marketers seeking to measure advertising effectiveness against sales. They show a growing insistence upon advertising accountability. They want to be sure that each dollar spent does maximum work. Moreover, advertising is coming to be recognized as just one, albeit very important, element in a rather complex communications "mix."

What goes into the "mix" to impress the public favorably or negatively? There are the product itself, packages, labels, tags, all the physical trappings. There are the virtual mountains of paper—annual reports, employee booklets, company literature,

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The imaginative company continues its search for fresh ideas, talent and experience

catalogs, news releases, stationery, calling cards, invoices—all of them communicating something about your company. Then there are exhibits and trade shows, the appearance of your offices and plants, your signage, your transport equipment. Add the trademarks, trade names, brand names, logotypes, slogans, company colors. Don't forget your public relations, sales promotion, distributors, salesmen, dealers, point-of-sales displays.

Do these factors work with your advertising to influence the public? Experienced marketers insist that they do! And that is only a *partial* list of communications elements that go into the total mix.

Old Ruts vs. New Horizons

Who will take responsibility for these other communications elements? Understandably, few advertising agencies are equipped to handle the broad communications function—even if that business were not geared to media and the commission system. Indeed, agencies can be of little help to a client in communications areas other than media.

At the same time, few companies are organized to examine their total communications picture with objectivity, to see it in reasonable balance, to visualize it as a coordinated whole. Most companies find it easier to overkill. And old ruts offer a deceptive comfort. It seems easier to spend more than to scrutinize other communications areas adequately. It's just too bothersome to analyze the communications inadequacy of product, package, promotion, business forms, architecture, signage, transportation, corporate identity and all the other factors so critical in determining the public attitude.

Some companies do recognize the complexities of today's communications. Accordingly, they have searched for fresh ideas, talent, and specialized experience in *all* aspects of communications. And they have come to appreciate keenly that the specialization and objectivity they seek can be found most often outside their own organizations. In brief then, *communications planning is not advertising planning—although advertising is assuredly a part of it.*

Imagination in Action

If total communications is complex, it also calls for an imaginative approach that honors no set rules. More often, the approach breaks rules to good effect—an effect which causes the consumer to react instinctively and positively.

Item. With Lippincott & Margulies' help in marketing and communications planning, Eastern Airlines effected a complete turnaround. A totally different corporate image—that of a dynamic, new airline—replaced that of airline distinguished mainly for poor passenger service. The turnaround was implemented by a full-throttle corporate identity program reaching all aspects of Eastern's operation—ticket offices, flying equipment, uniforms, corporate signature, and many other things. Most importantly, net profits also did a dramatic turnaround and rose significantly.

Item. Imagination gives life to product design too. Royal broke sales records as well as design precedents with its lightweight "Royalite" portable typewriter. According to the firm, it became "one of the most popular and fastest selling items of its kind that the industry has seen in years." So successful, in fact, was the sculptured design by Lippincott & Margulies that the concept is expected to be applied to other Royal consumer products.

Item. When Tareyton developed a believeable product difference with its dual filter cigarette and the package was transformed by Lippincott & Margulies from a dowdy container into a new design, sales jumped 106 percent in the first year. Ad expenditures did not increase during that period.

Item. Johnson's Wax exhibit at the 1964-65 New York World's Fair was created with one of the smallest budgets at the Fair. Yet the firm's return, by its own reckoning, amounted to tens of millions of dollars in publicity alone.

As Johnson's consultant, Lippincott & Margulies appreciated the praise and the rave reviews awarded the exhibit and the film, "To Be Alive!" L&M appreciated even more the queues of people waiting to go inside, day after day—the longest lines at the Fair.

EASTERN
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Miami

And so it goes. Citgo, Chrysler Corporation, U.S. Steel, New York Life—look closely at the marketing activities of leading American corporations and you'll see total communications working creatively and in coordination with advertising to attract customers and increase sales.

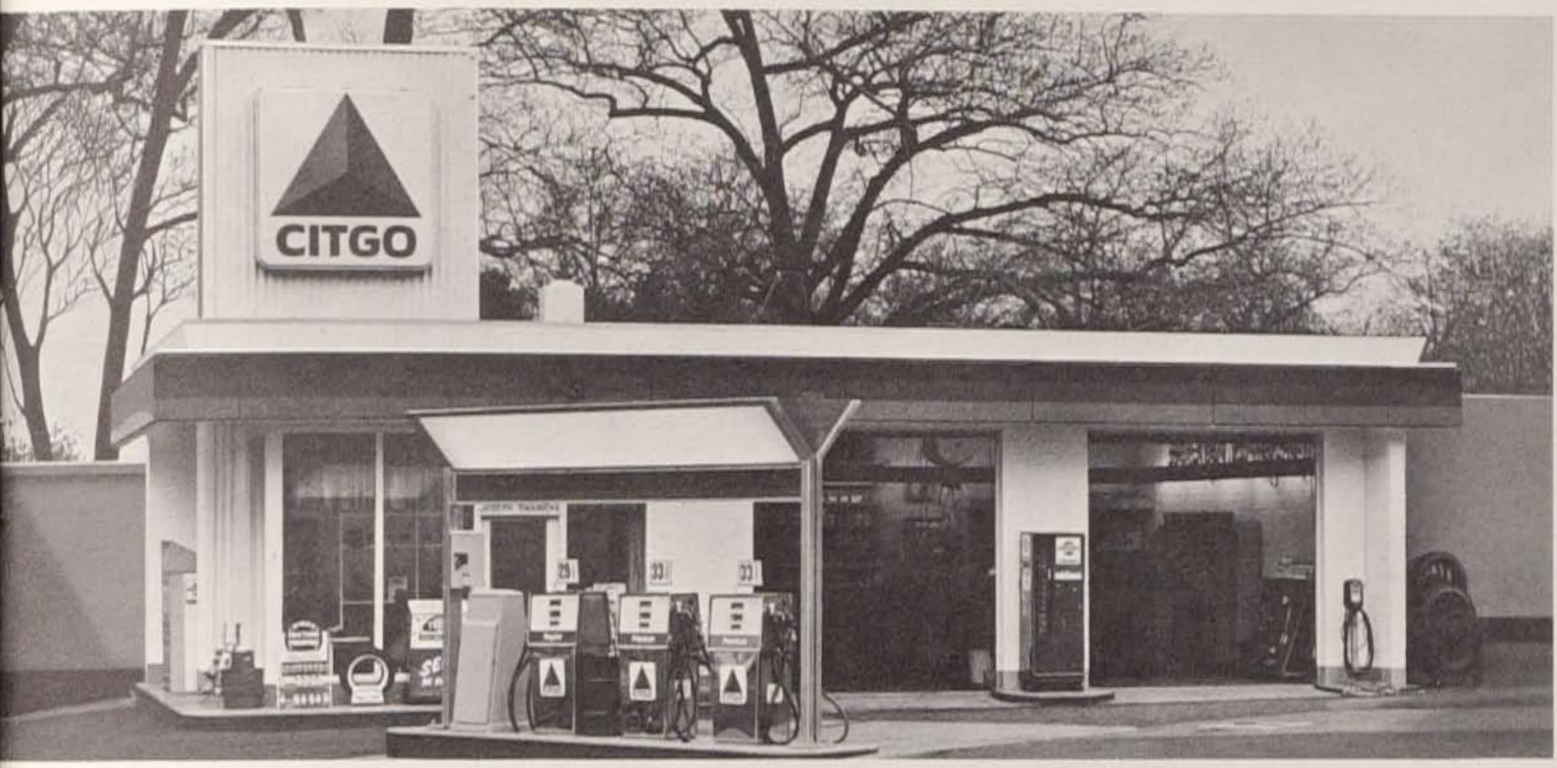
The Indispensable Element

The indispensable element in total communications—beyond creativity and coordination—is *communications planning.* That means making every part of your communications activity mesh together in the most effective manner to produce total impact, time after time after time. *This does not mean uniformity; it means direction.* Your goal: To induce your publics to experience your superiority—at point of sale, in the consumer's home, in your office, at your shareholder's meeting—wherever you can show that your company and products have something demonstrably new or better.

To cry "new, new, new" or "better, better, better" may possibly have a limited effect upon the public. But a more enduring effect is achieved by *showing* it. When a company does this, and utilizes all opportunities available to enrich its communications "mix," it realizes tremendous advantages over its competitors.

Goodbye, Overkill

Think about it. Why do some companies enjoy an unmistakable posture of success? It starts, of course, with an excellent product or service, constantly made better. But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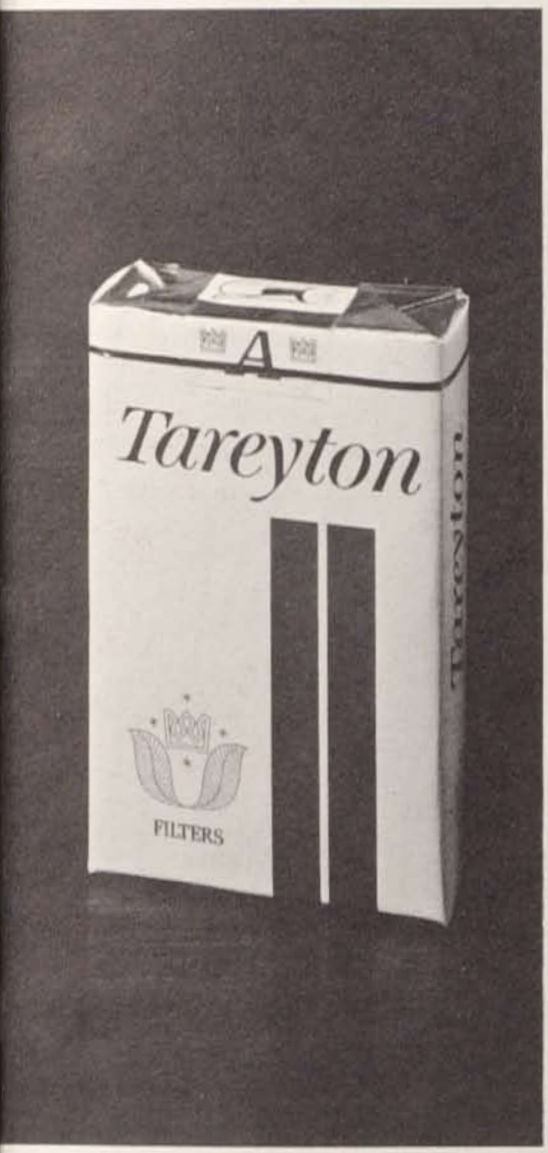
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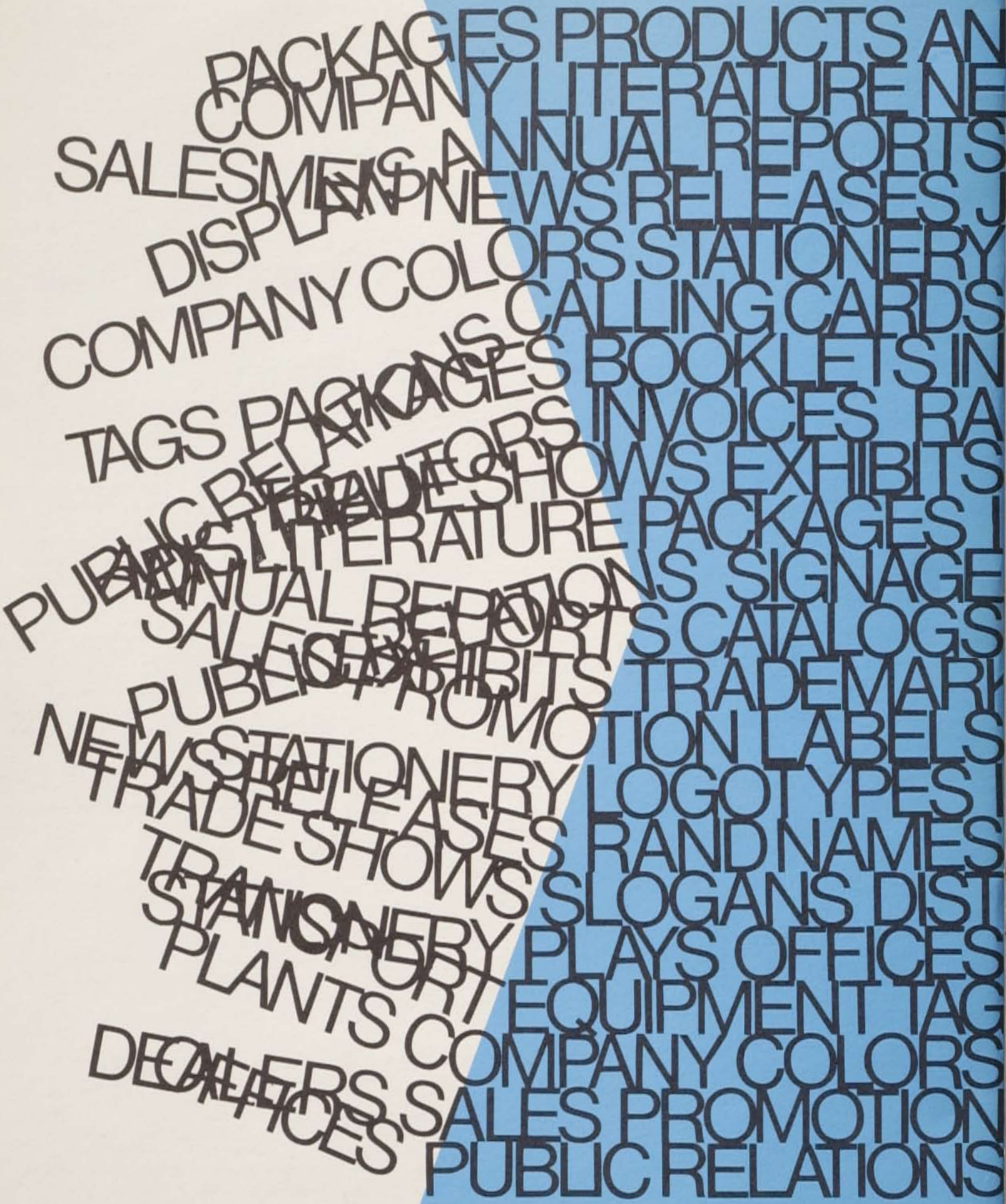
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Total Communications Planning: The sensible approach to effective marketing

beyond that is the company's ability to make people see it as a forward-looking enterprise, full of spirit, energy and accomplishment.

What makes a company look something less than successful? It may have a good product and service and its advertising may be well conceived and executed. But somehow—through the appearance of its product, the look of its offices, the appearance of its stationery, or the inadequacies of other communications elements—the overall impression is ominously negative. To paraphrase Emerson, "What these companies are shouts so loudly you cannot hear what they say!"

Overkill notwithstanding, a company's advertising agency can't be blamed for such situations. The problem, then, rests with corporate management.

Company executives must ask themselves if their entire communications system is in reasonable balance. In uncompromising terms, they must establish a *communications* budget and ask: 1) is it the right size? 2) are appropriations in balance for *each* communications activity? 3) does the outlay add up to the most effective communications "mix"?

Considering the scope and nature of the communications task, advertising agencies cannot do the job alone. It's not that agencies aren't creative. Many are. But advertising isn't the only route, or even the most effective course for all companies.

Furthermore, ad agencies aren't structured to provide overall guidance in developing a total corporate communications program.

There is one course of action that makes sound sense. The first step is the development of a specific and total communications plan based on an articulated set of corporate objectives. This plan should integrate advertising with all non-advertising communications opportunities.

Obviously, it is not a matter to be dealt with superficially. And it is precisely at this point that many companies look outside their own organizations and call in a consultant. For the plan to be successful an impartial, searching analysis is required within the disciplines of both marketing *and* communications. As many firms have learned to their profit, the qualified consultant offers the advantage of viewing the problem from the circumference of the marketing environment under analysis—far enough outside to be uncommitted to a narrowly specialized point of view but close enough inside to see the problem clearly in its broad context.

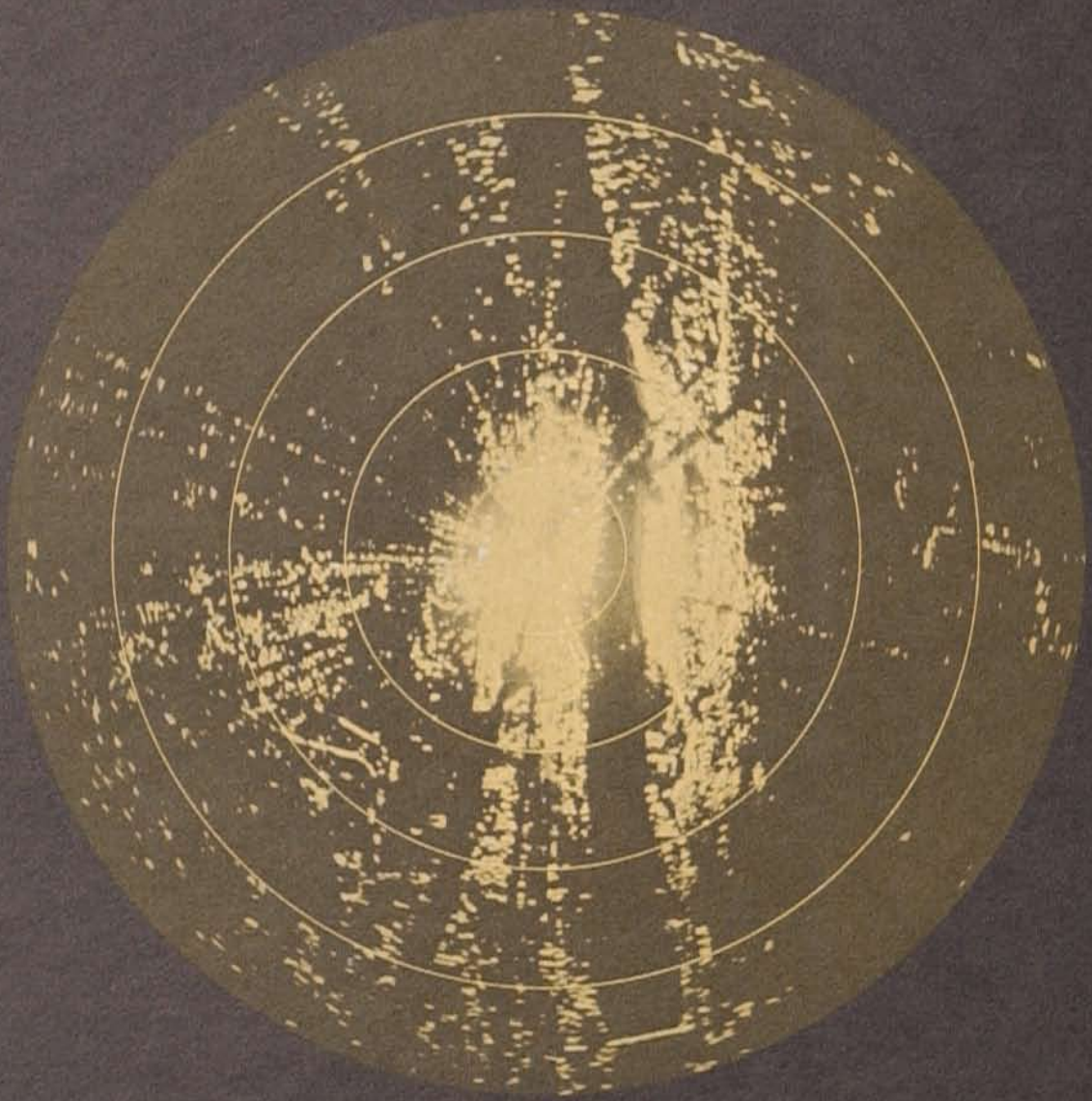
Once a corporation's position is defined and its goals set, it is ready to organize for total communications. In essence, this requires the coordination of different skills within the existing company framework. Some Lippincott & Margulies clients have appointed a director of communications. Other larger companies are planning to set up a post of vice president of communications, overseeing the areas of advertising, sales promotion, packaging, product planning, public relations and corporate identification. By structuring a single staff executive post responsible for all communications, these companies achieve two prime benefits: 1) All communications "speak the same language," 2) Central control of the communications "mix" expenditure virtually guarantees a greater contribution to profits.

Advertising overkill is *not* the answer. There *is* a better way. The answer to today's communications needs lies in the concept of total communications planning. This concept can harness creativity, put it to work in a coordinated fashion, and produce cumulative results that will greatly increase a company's ability to communicate more efficiently, and thus more effectively.

If this is done, advertising overkill will become a bad memory.

Overkill and its ineffectual megamessage are rooted in ill-conceived, ill-coordinated, lop-sided communications systems. When such systems are restructured intelligently one achieves balance in his communications efforts, and can't help but receive more for his communications dollar.

The company that takes the initiative and tries spending in the underspent areas of communications will achieve a new competitive thrill. This company will find that it is spending a lot less and enjoying its communications results much more.



DESIGN BREAKTHROUGH FOR SMALL CRAFT RADAR

"By show's end orders totalled more than $1,000,000 in retail sales"

The National Boat Show in New York signals a new season of planning and spending—estimated to approach $3-billion in 1967.

Even the most unsophisticated consumer perceives, however dimly, some relationship between a desire to buy and the way a product is designed. Successful design converts a "looker" into a buyer. Small wonder then that each new product design represents a new challenge to a marketing man. To achieve success, marketers know that the design must reflect several things: not the least of which are the quality of the product itself, the way it is to be used, and the manner in which it is sold.

As an adventure in new product design, consider the Decca 101, a radar unit for pleasure boats and small commercial vessels. It sells for $2,600 and is produced by Decca Radar, British-based and largest manufacturer of marine navigation equipment in the world. Decca knew the U.S. boating market to be an increasingly competitive one. Every year the nation's growing armada of part-time sailors spend more heavily for new boats or for equipment to keep their present crafts shipshape. Last year they spent $2.8 billion for boats and equipment, about $200 million more than in the previous twelve months. If the experts are right, the sales figures will rise again. This market action was readily apparent to Roy Mitchell, President of Decca, when he proposed that Lippincott & Margulies create a design for his company's new, small-craft radar unit.

Mr. Mitchell wanted a standout design that would give Decca a competitive edge. And he wanted a design as unique in appearance as the mechanism of the product was unique in engineering and performance. Mr. Mitchell sought a perfect match between product and design—the design reflecting the product's superiority; the product's performance supporting the high quality impression imparted by the design.

The assignment was challenging. This became all the more apparent when the original breadboard mock-ups for Decca 101 were presented to Lippincott & Margulies in London. The mock-ups were based on the rather stodgy, old "pot" look of ordinary equipment. Installed on a 30-foot or larger boat, the Decca 101 unit would have been almost indistinguishable from the competition. And it would not instill a feeling of pride of ownership in the buyer.

Experienced marketers feel they often work at cross purposes with those of the engineering department. Engineering bears down hard upon technology, expecting operating efficiency to carry the sales burden. Marketing, on the other hand, is inclined to take engineering expertise for granted and hopes for a product with exciting eye-appeal. Frequently, they are disappointed.

In creating its new radar instrument, Decca Marine Products sought specialized assistance from Lippincott & Margulies' product design department, widely known for its marketing judgment. From the start, engineering and industrial designer were partners in the new model's development.

The result: a radar system that combines—at reasonable cost—superior technology with unique and pleasing appearance.

The employment of design services does not insure product success—as many market failures will attest. For however appreciative a design firm may be of aesthetically-pleasing form, it must come to grips with other realities; Function, its relationship to construction material, material and product longevity, environment in which the product will be used, and by no means the least important, the tricky currents of the marketing milieu itself. Thus, a marine radar system designed to project a feeling of elegance alone might not appeal to the more rugged sensibilities of a power boat owner or officer on a commercial vessel.

Distinctly Decca. The trim design of the Decca 101 single unit antenna sets this power boat apart from others tied up in the marina. It is handsomely mounted on a raked trunnion giving the scanner a dynamic forward thrust. Ownership of the new radar system becomes a point of pride with marine sportsmen—a pride that is nourished by the unit's strong identifiable characteristics.

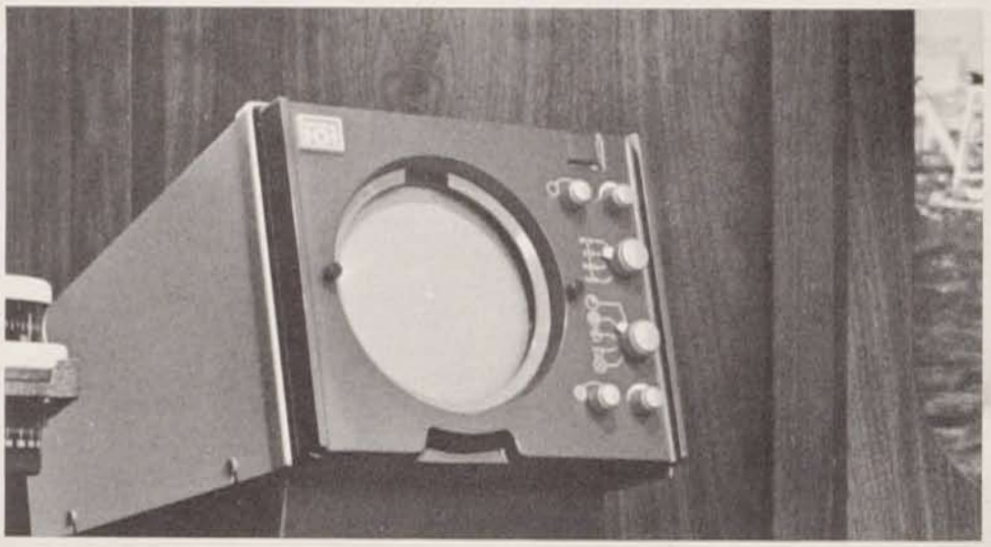
Essence of Reliability. The controls of the splash-proof display face are simple and straightforward, providing warning signals and navigational aid from a range of 25 yards to 15 miles. The design bespeaks reliable performance and freedom from gimmickry. Mounting of the unit on bulkhead, bridge or overhead is easily accomplished by removing a few screws and repositioning the base.

Lippincott & Margulies carefully studied how the system would be used by the boat owner. Optimum location in relationship to each of the other operating functions on the craft was analyzed. So were the trends in design change in small boats over the past few years. In this regard, the design had to be tailored primarily for power boats since these make up the larger part of the market. Even so, the design had to be compatible with sail and commercial boat needs.

Other challenges to the design team included: space limitations aboard ship, visibility of radar screen related to general visibility, reduction of drag from antenna, maximum protection for electronic components, easy access to components for servicing.

The finished unit is a compact, high performance unit, extremely attractive and easily identifiable. It is functional, practical and easy to install and maintain. New materials—including polyester plastics, fibreglass and styrene—keep the unit lightweight and durable.

As the nation's part-time sailors spend to maintain and update their craft, Decca expects its 101 to have a decided edge on its competition. If the company's experience at the New York Boat Show in January, 1967 is any index, its expectations will be fulfilled. Over 400 units were sold by show's end.



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of Design Sense will find the following of special interest:

Design Sense No. 49—What Wall Street Says and Does about the Corporate Image
What effect has corporate image on the price of a company's stock and the way it is traded on Wall Street? This question is examined in depth by the people who should know best—the men of Wall Street. Their opinions are supported by a study of the behavior of individual stock issues over a four year period.

Design Sense No. 44—Corporate Turnaround
How professional management takes stock of where a company is going and how it proposes to get there...how an old corporate identity is scrapped and replaced. Described are the behind-the-scenes reshaping of three corporate identities and the far-reaching effects of the individual programs of all three.

Design Sense No. 43—Closing the Image Gap
How two major corporations—Cities Service and Eastern Airlines—redirected their marketing efforts. In one of the most sweeping changes ever made in the oil industry, Cities Service moved dramatically to improve its competitive position, while Eastern Airlines showed "how much better an airline can be."

Design Sense No. 41—Two Assignments: U.S. Rubber and Borg-Warner
U.S. Rubber and Borg-Warner suffered from the same affliction: failure to identify themselves precisely to their various publics and, therefore, failure to communicate their true business character. But the specific cure for each was quite different, pointing up the dangers of generalizing about corporate communications.

Design Sense No. 40—Johnson Goes to the Fair
Much has been written about the outstanding S. C. Johnson & Son Pavilion at the 1964-65 New York World's Fair. Deservedly so, since it was a thumping success. Little has been said, however, of how the exhibit was created. Here is that story—the conception, the problems, the decision-making and execution of a highly effective showcase.

A limited number of these issues are still available.

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